DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 097 IR 053 648

TITLE	Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse: Third Annual Report.
INSTITUTION	Oregon State Library, Salem. Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.
PUB DATE	90
NOTE	26p.; For the first and second annual reports, see IR 053 647 and ED 333 890.
AVAILABLE FROM	Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse, Oregon State Library, State Library Building, Salem, OR 97310.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Literature; *Censorship; Childrens Literature; Data Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; *Intellectual Freedom; *Learning Resources Centers; *Library Materials; Longitudinal Studies; *Parent Grievances; *Public Libraries; Reading Materials; School Libraries
IDENTIFIERS	*Oregon

ABSTRACT

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received reports of formal challenges to 25 books and 1 recording during the time period between July 1, 1989, and June 30, 1990. It is noted that 17 of the challenged items were held by public libraries and 9 by school library media centers, with 21 items designated as children's and young adult materials and 5 as materials for adults. In 20 of the libraries, the materials were retained; in one instance access to materials was restricted; and in one case material was reclassified. Challenges against two titles had not been resolved at the end of the year. Materials with sexual references and themes and graphic language were challenged 11 times; stories or illustrations that were considered scary or violent and that might lead to fearful or aggressive behavior were challenged 5 times; and books with perceived occult, witchcraft, or satanic references were challenged 3 times. Other challenges objected to references to drugs and the drug world, evolution, disrespectful behavior, and negative images of Santa Claus. All of these challenges were reportedly initiated by individuals. Details about each of the challenges include the name of the library, its location, the title and author of the item, and summaries of the objections and actions taken. A 3-year overview of intellectual freedom challenges in Oregon libraries is presented in four graphs showing the number of challenges reported by type of library, by age designation, by type of objection, and by final decision. Completing the report is information on assistance provided by the clearinghouse and cooperative and educational activities in which the clearinghouse was involved during the year. (MAB)

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

Third Annual Report

July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

Third Annual Report

July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990

Coordinator, Mary Ginnane
Rural/Small Library Development Consultant

Oregon State Library
Salem, Oregon
1990

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.
Annual Report. -- 1988- . -- Salem, Or. : Oregon State Library, [1988-

Annual
Report year ends June 30.

1. Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. 2. Freedom of Information--Oregon. 3. Censorship--Oregon. I. Oregon State Library. II. Title.

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Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

- To establish a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.
- To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.
- To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.
- To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Third Annual Report
of the
Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

Introduction

The *Third Annual Report* of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse describes Clearinghouse activities during the time period between July 1, 1989 and June 30th, 1990. The report begins with a summary of data about challenges against library materials reported to the Clearinghouse in 1989-90. The details about each challenge reported by public libraries and school library media centers in 1989-90 follows. The collection of a third year of data about challenges against library materials in Oregon invites a comparison with the two previous years and a three year overview is included in this year's annual report. Completing the *Third Annual Report* is information about assistance provided by the Clearinghouse, and cooperative and educational activities in which the Clearinghouse was involved in 1989-90.

The scope of the data collected by the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is limited to formal challenges against any type of library material in any type of library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse reports the

details about challenges as they are recorded on "Reconsideration Report" forms submitted by library or school staff, or occasionally by citizens, to the Clearinghouse. Some editorial license is employed in transcribing the details from the forms to the annual report. Further information about details is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. The Clearinghouse may initially find out about challenges from sources such as newspaper articles, and may request that "Reconsideration Report" forms be submitted about these challenges.

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1989-90

A total of 25 books and one recording were reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse as being formally challenged between July 1, 1989 and June 30th, 1990. The challenge to an audio recording by recording artist Tone Loc was the first challenge against audio materials reported to the Clearinghouse since it was established in 1987.

Seventeen of the challenged items were held by public libraries and nine items were held by school libraries. Twenty-one of the challenged materials were designated as children's and young adult materials and five were materials for adults. In 20 of the 26 challenges, the materials were retained in each library through decisions made by librarians, library boards, or school boards. In one instance access to materials was restricted and in one case

material was reclassified. Materials were removed from two libraries. *Wideacre*, an adult fiction paperback by Philippa Gregory, was removed from a public library and *The Horror of High Ridge*, a title in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, was removed from an elementary school library media center. The challenges against two titles are still in progress and final decisions are pending.

The largest number of objections to library materials in 1989-90 focused on sexual references and themes and graphic language with 11 objections recorded. Stories or illustrations that were considered scary or violent and may lead to fearful behavior or aggressive behavior were challenged five times. Books with perceived occult, witchcraft, or satanic references were challenged three times. Other challenges objected to references to drugs and the drug world, evolution, disrespectful behavior, and negative images of Santa Claus.

The Clearinghouse attempts to document challenges which are initiated by any organized groups. No organizations were reported as formally challenging library materials in 1989-90. The challenges were all reported to be initiated by individuals.

Details about Reported Challenges

Specific information about the challenges reported to the Clearinghouse in 1989-90 is given below, organized according

to library type and arranged by name of the library where the challenges occurred. Under the name of each library the titles challenged are listed in chronological order according to the date when decisions about the challenges were finalized.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Springfield Public Library, Springfield

- *Robbie and the Leap Year Blues* by Norma Klein (Juvenile)

  Summary of objections: No redeeming features; adults in the book "sleep around"; not one healthy marriage is portrayed; a young boy seems intent on getting his friend to undress with his girlfriend; "we don't want children doing these things, so why do we persist in telling them it's okay in books like this?"

  Summary of events: Children's Librarian read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Children's Librarian, 8/30/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *The Friends of Emily Culpepper* by Ann Coleridge (Juvenile)

  Summary of objections: Ending is scary and unhappy; evil wins out; witch was not portrayed with typical symbols of hat or broom so witchcraft/occult theme was not readily identifiable.

  Summary of events: Children's Librarian read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Children's Librarian, 11/11/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Hillsboro Public Library, Hillsboro

- *Bang, Bang, You're Dead* by Louise Fitzhugh (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Objections to the violence and aggression illustrated; felt the author was actually telling children that hurting others is fun and that the book was "persuasive in a violent way."

Summary of events: Children's Librarian read the book and collected reviews and author information. Book retained in decision by Children's Librarian and Library Director, 9/19/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Salem Public Library, Salem

- *The Keys to Tulsa* by Brian F. Berkey (Adult)

Summary of objections: Attitudes condoning the drug scene offensive; it could be a bad influence to young and impressionable people.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews and other support information. Book retained in decision by selecting librarian, Assistant Director and Library Director, 11/7/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Nuts* by Gahan Wilson (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Objection to language that profanes God's name; objection to cartoon where child prays that his parents will be killed so they won't see his report card.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews and other support information. Book retained in decision by selecting librarian, Assistant Director and Library Director, 11/8/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Douglas County Library System, Roseburg

- *The Ruby in the Smoke* by Philip Pullman (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Using drugs is portrayed as beneficial; main character smokes opium in order to remember details of her past which leads her to solve the mystery; the drug has no side effects and is seen as a positive in this situation; may influence children.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book reclassified from children's collection to young adult collection. Decision made by library staff and Library Director, 11/28/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Fox at School* by Edward Marshall (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Young children may mimic parts of the story (for example, showing disrespect to a substitute teacher like Fox or pulling up dress like Carmen the Frog) because they may not understand the lesson; story makes incidents appear glamorous to a child.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision made by library staff and Library Director, 1/24/90. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Henry* by Nina Bawden (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Evolution referred to as a scientific fact.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by library staff and Library Director, 4/26/90. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Flowers in the Attic* by V.C. Andrews (Young adult)

Summary of objections: In writing about a rape the author appears to have the girl like it; misinformation about whether pregnancy could happen in this situation; implied incestuous relationship with brother.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews, and other support information. Book retained in decision made by library staff and Library Director, 7/17/90. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Oregon City Public Library, Oregon City

- *Razored Saddles* by Joe Lansdale (Adult)

Summary of objections: One short story was objectionable because of homosexual theme.

Summary of events: Staff and Library Board read the story and looked at reviews. Book retained in decision by the Library Board at regular meeting, 1/13/90. No further appeal filed.

Tigard Public Library, Tigard

- *Father Christmas* by Raymond Briggs (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Offensive picture of Santa Claus sitting on toilet; Santa is shown drinking alcohol which may be a bad influence on children.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Youth Services Staff and Library Director, 4/16/90. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Seal of Dracula* by Barrie Pattison (Adult)

Summary of objections: Graphic pictures from nude lesbian/vampire European films; explicit sadistic sexual subject matter; restriction from children was requested.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Library Director, 4/25/90. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Loc'ed After Dark* by Tone Loc (Audio Recording)

Summary of objections: Sexually explicit lyrics on three songs; promotes sexual contact before marriage.

Summary of events: Decision not yet final.

Coquille Public Library, Coquille

- *Parchment House* by Cara Lockhart Smith (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Book considered to be cruel, sadistic, vicious, and ugly; objections to victimization of children, misdirected view of children's institutions, and portrayal of adults as callous and evil; may result in a warped view of life, warped values, provoke nightmares and fear, or incite sadistic behavior.

Summary of events: Staff collected reviews and support information; staff and Library Board read the book. Book retained in decision by the Library Board at regular meeting, 3/14/90. No further appeal filed.

Umatilla Public Library, Umatilla

- *Wideacre* by Philippa Gregory (Adult)

Summary of objections: Moral objections because of incestuous relationship between sister and brother.

Summary of events: Staff collected reviews and support information; staff and Library Board read the book. Book removed in decision by the Library Board at regular meeting, 5/7/90.

Sweet Home Public Library, Sweet Home

- *Gimme an H.E.L.P.* by Frank Bonham (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Too sexually explicit although treatment of suicide theme was considered well-done.

Summary of events: Library Board read the book and consulted with youth counselors. Book retained in young adult section in decision by the Library Board at regular meeting, 6/14/90. No further appeal filed.

Cornelius Public Library, Cornelius

- *Paradise Motel* by Eric McCormack (Adult)

Summary of objections: Too graphic in language, violence and sexual references.

Summary of events: Decision not yet final.

Challenges in School Library Media Centers

Clarkes Elementary School, Mulino
- *Down A Dark Hall* by Lois Duncan (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Objections to explicit description of dead spirits controlling the girls in the book; "may open doors that do not need to be opened."

Summary of events: Materials Reevaluation Committee of four community representatives, two school staff representatives, and one librarian read the book, reviewed the library media selection policy, and collected book reviews and information about the author. Committee unanimously recommended to the Superintendent that the book be retained. The Superintendent supported the recommendation. Recommendation to retain accepted by School Board, 12/6/89.

Astor Elementary School, Astoria
- *Wait Till Helen Comes* by Mary Downing Hahn (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Cover art too frightening; content beyond maturity level of the school's students; realistic rather than fictional writing style; questionable characterization of parents; storyline deals with the supernatural; portrayal of death in a hopeless way which could frighten children.

Summary of events: Instructional Materials Review Committee of two community representatives, two teachers, the School Board Chairperson, one librarian, and the district's Director of Curriculum and Staff Development read the book, reviewed the library media selection policy, and collected book reviews and information about the author and book awards. Committee unanimously recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 1/11/90.

Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem

- *The Last Mission* by Harry Mazer (Young adult)

  Summary of objections: Objectionable language.

  Summary of events: After submission of formal challenge to remove the book from all elementary schools, a committee of citizens, teachers, board member, and administrator read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 2/27/90.

- *The View from the Cherry Tree* by Willo Davis Roberts (Juvenile)

  Summary of objections: Objectionable language; murderer is a drug dealer.

  Summary of events: After submission of formal challenge to remove the book from all elementary schools, a committee of citizens, teachers, board member, and administrator read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 3/13/90.

- *A Light in the Attic* by Shel Silverstein (Juvenile)

  Summary of objections: Some poems may provoke children to act in opposition to family taught behavior and values.

  Summary of events: The book was previously challenged, reviewed, and retained in 1982. District Library Media Coordinator recommended that decision to retain govern subsequent challenges. Recommendation accepted and book retained in decision by School Board, 3/27/90.

• *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Illustrations are satanic and glorify pain; promotes evil intent and preying upon the innocent by evil; poor writing quality.

Summary of events: After submission of formal challenge to remove the book from all elementary schools, a committee of citizens, teachers, board member, and administrator read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 5/22/90.

Cascade Locks School, Cascade Locks

• *85 Tests,* by Chilton's Editorial Staff (Adult and Young adult)

Summary of objections: The content of certain surveys and tests in this collection not appropriate for students, especially those in the younger grades.

Summary of events: After submission of a formal challenge to remove the book or limit access in this K - 12 school library, an eight-member Challenged Materials Committee read the book and attempted to locate reviews. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be restricted to students in grades 9 - 12. Book restricted in decision by School Board, 3/28/90.

Mid Valley Elementary School, Odell

• *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Demonic character; theme concerned with magic, witchcraft and sorcery.

Summary of events: After submission of a formal challenge about classroom use, an eight-member Challenged Materials Committee read the book, located many critiques, reviews, and award notices (Newbery Medal, 1963) about the book, and considered the opinions of district school librarians and teachers. The author wrote a letter about the book and her personal beliefs. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Book retained for classroom use and library access in decision by School Board, 3/28/90. Several local churches replaced copies of *A Wrinkle in Time* which were discovered to be missing from school libraries during the challenge.

La Grande Central Elementary School, La Grande

- *The Horror of High Ridge* by Julius Goodman (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Objections to portrayals of gruesome violence imposed upon young readers' imaginations; unwholesome images conjured up for early readers does nothing to "further the psyche, strengthen the mind, or enrich the imagination."

Summary of events: After submission of a formal challenge, a four-member review committee read the book and located reviews. Book removed from elementary school in decision by School Board, 6/13/90.

Three Year Overview

The Clearinghouse is still considered to be in a development phase, and continues to publicize its services to libraries in Oregon in order to encourage data reporting. Absolute conclusions about trends drawn from the collected data cannot be stated until the Clearinghouse is confident that the majority of challenges are being reported. What follows is an overview of

challenges against library materials in Oregon based on the data reported since the establishment of the Clearinghouse.

Over three years, there have been 77 challenges against library materials and one challenge against a library art exhibit in Oregon. Forty of the challenged materials were owned by public libraries and 37 by school library media centers. Overwhelmingly, materials designated for children and young adults are challenged more than materials for adults. There were 62 challenges submitted about materials for children and young adults, 1 challenge submitted about a recording for young adults, and only 14 submitted about materials for adults. In 77% of the challenges (59 times) the materials were retained on the library shelves with no restrictions. Materials were removed from library shelves only seven times or in 9% of the incidents.

The following charts illustrate the data about intellectual freedom challenges in Oregon libraries as reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse between May, 1987 and June, 1990. Figure 1 illustrates the number of challenges in public libraries and the number of challenges in school library media centers. Figure 2 illustrates whether the challenges each year were against materials for children and young adults, or against materials for adults.

Figure 1

Challenges Reported: By Type of Library

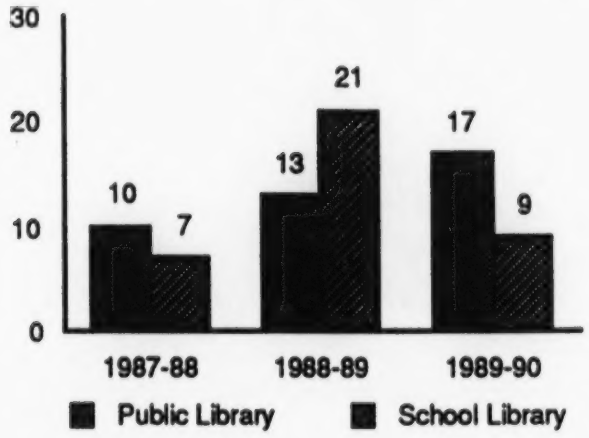


Figure 2

Challenges Reported: By Age Designation

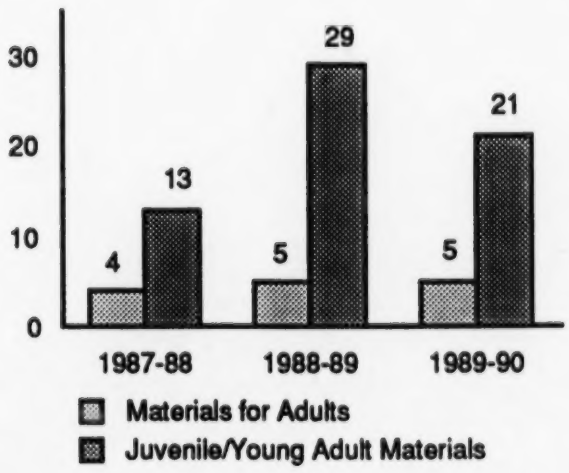


Figure 3 classifies the objections to materials each year into broad categories. Often multiple objections are cited against materials but the chart illustrates only one major objection for each challenge.

Figure 3

Challenges Reported: By Type of Objection

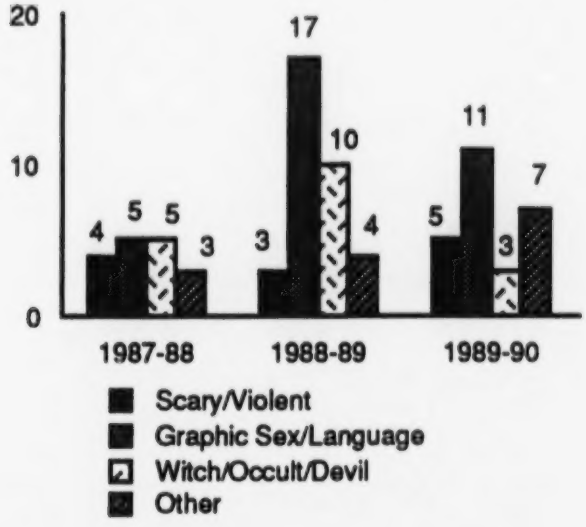
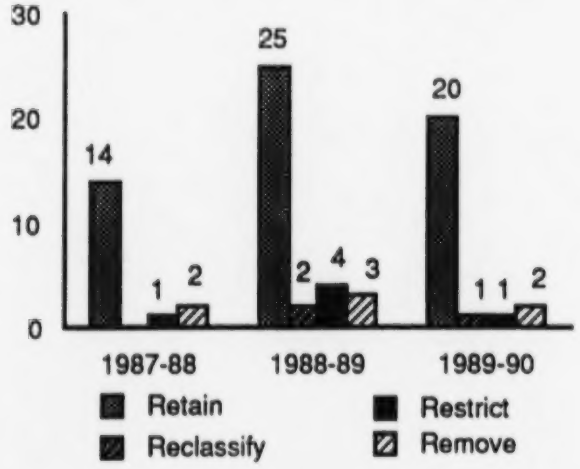


Figure 4 illustrates the final outcome in each challenge, whether the materials were retained without restriction in each library, reclassified to a different age or subject section in the library, restricted to a certain age group or restricted to access only with parental permission, or whether the materials were removed from a library. Transferring materials from one library in a district to another library is classified as a removal in this chart. There were

two decisions pending when *The Second Annual Report* was published in September, 1989. Final decisions have been made about these two challenges and the charted data for 1988-89 illustrate this updated information. The decisions about two challenges are still pending in 1989-90 and do not appear in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Challenges Reported: By Final Decision



Information Requests to the Clearinghouse in 1989-90

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received 45 requests for information and assistance during its third year of operation. Sixteen of the requests were for information about titles which were being formally challenged. Twelve of the

requests were for information to assist library staff members with responding to verbal challenges. State Library Reference staff provided reviews, author information, information about literary awards and other information responding to these requests.

The Clearinghouse also received eleven requests for assistance with policy issues in a number of areas including adopting intellectual freedom statements in a collection development policy, confidentiality of circulation records of minors, confidentiality of borrower registration records, accepting gifts of videos on controversial subjects, reserve sections in school libraries, and meeting room policies. The Library Development staff provided existing law, statements of American Library Association principles, sample policies, and suggested discussion points in these cases.

Six other information requests were directed to the Clearinghouse including requests for information about intellectual freedom organizations, building board support for intellectual freedom, and the number and location of challenges in Oregon and Washington.

Cooperative and Educational Activities in 1989-90

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was established in 1987 in a cooperative effort of the Oregon State Library, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon

Library Association, the Oregon Educational Media Association, and the American Association of University Women. The coordinator of the Clearinghouse serves on the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee. The Intellectual Freedom Committee's major work this year focused on promoting Banned Books Week, introducing a standing legislative plank for defending free access to ideas and information into the Legislative program of the Oregon Library Association, and drafting a statement about intellectual freedom for OLA's Vision 2000 Committee. This statement will be included in a document to be used as part of Oregon activities preparing for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services.

The Clearinghouse and the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee monitored a citizen's initiative measure on the ballot in Josephine County which would have restricted government agencies from giving birth control facts to minors without parental consent. While aimed at the County Health Department, the language of the measure would apparently have restricted the county library from providing access to minors to books and other materials containing birth control information. The measure was defeated on May 15, 1990 by a vote of 10,570 to 6,824.

The Coordinator of the Clearinghouse presented eight workshops or presentations at conferences, symposiums, and in-service training sessions sponsored by the Oregon Library Association, the Oregon Education Association, Multnomah

County Library, the Library and Information Network of Clackamas County and the Oregon Council of Teachers of English, among others. A poster session about the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was accepted for display at the American Library Association's annual conference. A total of two hundred and thirty-four persons were in attendance at all the presentations by the Clearinghouse.

The Clearinghouse sends regular summaries of the reconsideration reports received to the chairperson of the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee, the OEMA Intellectual Freedom Committee, the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, and People for the American Way. The latter two organizations report on Oregon public library and school intellectual freedom challenges in their publications, *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* (ALA, quarterly),*Banned Books Week Resource Manual* (ALA, annual), and *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn* (People for the American Way, annual.)

Production of the *Third Annual Report* of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was made possible with contributions from the following organizations. Their assistance in support of intellectual freedom is gratefully acknowledged.

Oregon Library Association
Oregon Educational Media Association
Oregon Department of Education
Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association
Oregon Education Association
American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon